ETHNOCENTRICITY IN ACADEMIC PHILOSOPHY

On Reading Different Texts and Reading Texts Differently in Swiss and South African Philosophy Departments

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Abstract

Philosophy is a core element in the intellectual history of all civilizations. Yet as an academic discipline, it is far from inclusive: Swiss philosophy departments factor out nearly everything outside the European canon. This text offers fundamental criticism of the focus on a narrow range of dominant epistemologies that, as will be argued, originate in Eurocentric ideologies. I will present a two-pronged approach, proposing a shift in curricula as well as in methods of philosophical inquiry.

Keywords: *academic philosophy, ethnocentrism, canon formation, university curriculum*

Philosophy, broadly defined as the study of knowledge, is a central element in the intellectual history of all civilizations. However, as an academic discipline, it is far from inclusive. Swiss philosophy departments – like most such institutions in both Europe and the English-speaking world – generally restrict their curricula to so-called Western philosophy, factoring out almost everything outside the European canon. In what follows, I will offer a criticism of the exclusive concentration on this specific kind of philosophy which, as I will argue, originates in Eurocentric ideologies.

This paper proposes a more inclusive approach to philosophical inquiry. I will showcase two examples of philosophy seminars in which I participated at Rhodes University in Grahamstown (Republic of South Africa) in 2017. The first seminar aimed to discuss ways to broaden the philosophy canon as it is taught by adopting a multi-faceted set of texts and topics. The second seminar focused on comparative conceptions of knowledge. Based on my experience at Rhodes, I will not only demonstrate the benefits of discussing non-Anglo-European philosophy, but also make concrete suggestions for how to implement such ways of teaching in Swiss philosophy departments. By critically assessing dominant traditions of thinking, I will underpin my assertion that academic philosophy, as it is currently taught in Swiss academic institutions, could gain enormous depth if it allowed for increasingly diverse, pluralistic approaches. By offering two combinable options for doing so, this paper discusses accessible paths of teaching philosophical issues from a more inclusive perspective – for a more versatile, culturally relevant philosophy curriculum. My final point will be that it is not only the canon of what is taught which we need to reconsider; indeed, changing reading lists could perhaps be seen as a secondary concern. Ultimately, I suggest that *what* is taught is less important than thinking about *how* philosophy is being taught. Thus, Swiss philosophy departments, I will argue, should embrace a two-pronged approach that includes both a change in reading lists and a change in methods of philosophical investigation.

Two preliminary remarks are in order. Firstly, it is not immediately and intuitively apparent what counts as «Western» philosophy. An author's origin can be instructive, but does not necessarily define her philosophical orientation. What I have in mind in deploying this term has to do, instead, with the kind of methodologies an author subscribes to, as well as what tradition, or canon, an author follows. Historically, Western philosophy traces its origin back to the pre-Socratics and its manner of engaging philosophically is influenced by the canon descending from this tradition. Consequently, «non-Western» philosophy, here defined ex-negativo, is philosophy that does not begin with the Greeks, neither thematically nor methodologically. Of course, drawing the distinction in this way evokes a problematic picture of incommensurable traditions and othering. I do not mean to reinforce this idea of clear-cut opposition and alterity. Rather, in what follows I will attempt to endorse a notion of philosophy that embraces inclusiveness of what has been, and for now still remains, strictly analytically segregated. Ultimately, the end goal of my proposals is to do away with the line I have just drawn.

Secondly, in recent years, an international debate on how to decolonize academic philosophy has emerged in the English-speaking world. A growing number of publications have addressed both current philosophical curricula (Graness 2016, Nefdt 2018) and the imbalance in philosophical scholarship (Krishnamurthy 2017, Cherry and Schwitzgebel 2017). It is striking that attempts to introduce this conversation to Switzerland remain largely absent (with notable exceptions, see for instance Holenstein 2004, 2010).[1] One reason for this absence is likely Switzerland's lack of diversity. This results in a situation in which the majority of philosophy departments, students and faculty members feel sufficiently and comfortably (enough) addressed by Aquinas, Kant, Hegel et al.[2] Additionally, as Patricia Purtschert (2012) has compellingly argued, the general assumption in Swiss public discourse continues to hold that there is no need to address the country's colonial legacy because Switzerland has never been an official colonial power. Philos-

ophy departments, therefore, might not see a need to critically examine the possibility that a one-sided preference for specific epistemologies may derive from Eurocentric, colonial ideologies. The so-called neutrality of philosophy, which is supposed to point towards the analysis of what it means to know something, thus dovetails well with the myth of Swiss political neutrality.[3]

The following text seeks to locate itself in this international debate and to contribute to the initiation of a process towards a less Eurocentric curriculum in Swiss philosophy departments.

Swiss Philosophy Departments: An Appraisal

Altogether, Swiss universities currently have nearly 30 chairs in philosophy spread over ten universities. There is not a single chair for non-Western philosophy. Among the eight philosophy departments in Switzerland that grant a PhD, no member of faculty regularly teaches anything outside the Western canon. Skimming through this year's (2018) course descriptions for undergraduate and graduate programs, it is difficult to avoid the impression that philosophy consists of Western thought only, even as course descriptions present a rather broad notion *what* philosophy is. If philosophy instruction in Switzerland spans a diversity of topics and methodologies, all of them are nonetheless Western.

This is not to say that none of the philosophers currently employed in Switzerland have ever read or discussed Chinese, Asian, or African philosophy. My point is that non-Western texts make no appearance in Swiss course descriptions. One could argue that in principle, lectures entitled *Philosophy of Language* or *Logic* could also discuss Asian philosophy, which has made important contributions to both subfields. To take an even more obvious example, it would also be possible for a chair in the history of philosophy to include Confucianism and, for instance, juxtapose it with early Aristotelianism.[4] I

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[1] Comparative and intercultural philosophy was briefly in trend in the 1990s, with contributions from Switzerland. One example is the work of Elmar Holenstein who taught at ETH Zürich (1990-2002) and contributed significantly to the project of intercultural philosophy. His work explores the complexity of cultural traditions and how heterogeneous phenomena can contribute to expanding the horizons of philosophy

[2] Occasional curriculum appearances of female philosophers like Hannah Arendt, G.E.M. Anscombe or Jennifer Saul ensure that *white* women are somewhat represented in the curriculum.

[3] This is not to say that colonialism and political neutrality are mutually exclusive. Rather, the myth of Switzerland as a neutral political haven is nurtured by the absence of Swiss colonies, despite Switzerland's immense profit from colonialism through international trade.

[4] This is not a plead to compare and call it even: Relativist thinking with regards to epistemologies does not support the need to decolonize knowledge – or our curricula. There is no space to argue for this point thoroughly. Essentially, I am opposing the view that epistemic decolonization requires us to attribute an equal claim to knowledge to rival epistemic perspectives. Rather, we must find ways to resist relativism *while* acknowledging that a certain epistemic perspective has indeed been unjustly imposed.

have, however, found no traces of such a juxtaposition in any of the current semester's lecture programs, or on the official university websites of the respective chairs (where expertise and special interests are listed).[5]

One argument against such a comparative approach could be that Aristotelianism is considered to be complex enough for students being introduced to the discipline; it is difficult to initially grasp and analyze the single author's argument in detail and thereby lay a foundation for further philosophical inquiry through close reading and concentrated argumentative analysis. I do not object to this. Rather, I *additionally* suggest a comparative manner of philosophical inquiry. Broadening the object of academic inquiry (to Confucianism, for instance) would be a way to uncover where the object of philosophical inquiry and the object of academic inquiry start to melt into one another. This would thus challenge students to grapple with the ways in which the process of analysis mirrors the objects of analysis.

Let me give you two examples from this year's autumn term. The first one is a course I myself took at the University of Basel: the *Introduction to Practical Philosophy*. It has only been altered slightly in its scope since I attended it in 2009, and still is one of the core classes all philosophy students enrolled in Basel are required to take in order to finish their undergraduate degree. Central to the class are Utilitarianism, Kantian and Aristotelian thought. The reading list extends from «John Stuart Mill to Peter Singer, from Immanuel Kant to Friedrich Kambartel and from Aristotle to Martha Nussbaum» (*Vorlesungsverzeichnis, Universität Basel 2018*, my translation). The second example is taken from the current curriculum of the University of Fribourg. The following courses are listed as touching upon the history of philosophy: *Les théologies des philosophes antiques, Lecture de textes philosophiques grecs, La rhétorique chez Gorgias et Platon, Les grandes questions de la métaphysique médiévale* and *L'anthropologie d'Augustin (Philosophie, programme commenté, Université de Fribourg* 2017-2018).[6]

This second example is not only meant to draw attention to the one-sided way in which the origin of philosophy is portrayed as specifically Western. Studying the history of philosophy also generates and perpetuates definitions of what philosophy consists of: Tracing the history of philosophy back to Thales does not only teach us what philosophy used to sound like, but, as the philosopher Peter Park puts it, «[b]y recounting philosophy's past (what philosophy was), the history of philosophy teaches what philosophy is (the concept of philosophy)» (Park 2013: 1). Park further argues that the history of philosophy

teaches the goals, rules, and language of proper philosophical reasoning. Teachers of philosophy do not merely recount the history of philosophy, they use it to define philosophy in exact terms and set its epistemic boundaries, differentiating it from other fields of knowledge such as mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, and theology. Philosophers use the history of philosophy to reaffirm the canon of philosophy in the sense also of the authors and texts that define the discipline and to show philosophy's coherent and progressive development. (op. cit.)

This is not to say that there are no specialists on African, Chinese, Indian, Islamic or Latin American thought at Swiss universities. They are just not in the philosophy departments. The University of St Gallen, for instance, has a designated chair for Chinese Culture and Society, dedicated to studying China's intellectual history. The University of Basel offers an MA and a PhD program in African Studies wherein the sociology of knowledge is one key thematic emphasis. Locating non-European philosophy in area studies departments is not necessarily wrong: these departments provide a context in which intellectual history and epistemologies of knowledge can be studied – and enriched – in relation to specific histories and cultural constellations. It may even appear to seem besides the point to mention this. However, philosophy as a discipline asks certain questions of texts and uses specific methods for discussing them that are not necessarily practiced in other humanities, social sciences, and area studies. This means that a division is drawn between «other» epistemologies and philosophy, which is thereby defined de facto as regionally Western and, moreover, simultaneously further defined as not belonging to any specific cultural context. This is why a Hegel specialist does not (generally) seek to teach in the German department and a chair for political philosophy cannot be squeezed into the political sciences without protest: The methods of investigation have different aims.

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[5] In order to get a comprehensive overview of the matter, one detailed enough to allow for spotting exceptions, a large-scale study of the current curricula would be necessary. The point here is about visibility. I thus focus on the material that is publicly accessible. To inspect at least one subdiscipline more closely, I contacted all 13 lecturers of logic in Swiss philosophy departments with the open question of what kind of logic they teach and the more specific question if they also teach non-Western logic. The 5 replies consistently stated that they confine their classes to «classical logic» (which, broadly construed, consists of propositional calculus and first-order logic). One lecturer additionally stated the importance of discussion about the historical construction of this kind of logic and its potential contingency.

[6] With this rather long list I want to emphasize that there would well be room for other classes.

Therefore, in fact, what I have just denoted as besides the point lies at the heart of the problem in question: One can study alternative epistemologies of knowledge, but *not* in philosophy departments. Non-Western epistemologies are labelled as part of «*area* studies», a term implying that what is discussed merely alludes to regional rather than universal paradigms of knowledge. In doing so, philosophy departments stake a claim to universality for themselves. Ironically, these claims to universality make philosophy departments look quite provincial, since they appear to be ignorant of their own status as part and parcel of a specific «area»: Europe.

Philosophy is one of the last bastions of so-called charity reading or, as it is also known, hermeneutic of faith (Park 2013: 23). To read a text with a hermeneutic of faith means to engage with it in the hope of discovering truth and/or beauty. As opposed to most natural scientists today, charity readers are open to the possibility that other thinkers, including people in different times *and cultures*, might know more than they do, or at least have views that can enrich their own in significant ways.[7] In contrast, not only natural science, but many contemporary humanists and social scientists emphasize what Park calls a «hermeneutic of suspicion» (*op. cit.*). The «suspicious» engagement with a text, as Bryan Van Norden observes,

looks for motives for the composition of a text that are unrelated to its truth or plausibility. Instead, they ask how the text serves ulterior motives like economic interests and relations of dominance and oppression, as well as sexist, racist, or imperialist conceptions of the world. (2017: 139)

Most scholars who use a hermeneutic of suspicion tend to reject a hermeneutic of faith as uncritical and naïve. However, reading philosophy – and reading philosophically – requires an effort to think about a text constructively and charitably, thus being open to discovering angles from which fresh, seminal insights can be gained. To exclude non-Western philosophy from this kind of engagement impedes non-Western thought from being read in this way. At the same time, the supposed neutrality that justifies reading charitably is what also makes it seem like philosophical inquiry is (or should be) indifferent to certain interests – so why not try and read something different? For as things stand, unless the canon opens, there can neither be a real charitable reading, nor a supposedly neutral view of philosophy.

So far I have shown the extent to which the widespread bias towards non-Western philosophy is also reproduced in Switzerland.[8] Both the curriculum and hiring decisions in Swiss philosophy departments perpetuate the notion that studying philosophy means studying Western philosophy.

I have furthermore identified ways in which philosophical investigation is inimitable in its manner of engagement with its sources. *Out*sourcing African philosophy to African Studies, for instance, precludes this work from becoming relevant *philosophically*. At the same time, I have suggested that this exclusion contradicts the very tenets of philosophical, «charitable» inquiry as propagated in departments of (Western) philosophy. The next section will outline and examine Purtschert's (2012) and Mudimbe's (1988) assertion that racism played a major role in the formation of the philosophical canon.

The Cultivated Human

The often heard expression ‹Western-European philosophy› is, in truth, a tautology. Why? Because philosophy is Greek in its nature; Greek, in this instance, means that in origin the nature of philosophy is of such a kind that it first appropriated the Greek world, and only it, in order to unfold. (Heidegger 1956: 30)

As Wilfrid Sellars put it pointedly, doing philosophy can be seen as an attempt «to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term» (1962: 369). The self-perception of the discipline is founded in its preoccupation not with particularities, but with the grounds of being and thinking. Assuming that the self-understanding of philosophy departments in Switzerland is sympathetic to the thought that their principle engagement is the quest for universal ideas, narrowing those ideas down seems counterproductive. Why, then, are Swiss philosophy departments still resolutely Eurocentric? In *Taking Back Philosophy* (2017), Van Norden sets out to challenge the essentialist views he sees as pervasive in European and American philosophy departments and defines philosophy as being grounded in a particular historical tradition. He remarks that

Africa and Asia were excluded from the philosophical canon by the confluence of two interrelated factors. On the one hand, defenders of Immanuel Kant's philosophy consciously rewrote

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[7] Of course, if you take seriously the possibility that others are right, you also have to take seriously the possibility that they are wrong.

[8] It would be interesting to see if, within the contemporary humanities taught in Switzerland, philosophy stands alone in this respect. Are there still art history programs that attend exclusively to Anglo-European art? Is there a history department in which only European history is studied?

the history of philosophy to make it appear that his Critical Idealism was the culmination toward which all earlier philosophy was groping, more or less successfully. On the other hand, European intellectuals increasingly accepted and systematized views of white racial superiority that entailed that no non-Caucasian group could develop philosophy. (2017: 63)

Getting into the details of the intellectual development of «the West» since Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) would clearly exceed the scope of this paper. I will confine the discussion to Purtschert's treatment of postcolonial philosophy. Purtschert argues that the Eurocentric ground that undergirds Western philosophical canon formation underwent a shift within its discursive knowledge structures. Alluding to the work of Mudimbe (1988), who dwells on the Foucauldian idea of discursive power (Foucault 1971), she remarks that while the renaissance era was predominantly pervaded by the thought of underlining similarities and resemblance, the classical period can be understood as foregrounding the idea of identity and alterity (2012: 345). In keeping with this, Park emphasizes that the only options taken seriously by most scholars regarding the origins of philosophy as late as the 18th century were that philosophy either began in Africa, in India *or* that both gave philosophy to Greece (2013: 9, 80).

Following Mudimbe (1988), this changed insofar as the reference point of philosophical contemplation shifted with the reception of Kant's writings. Kant (2006a) famously claimed that the experience of the sublime (*das Erhabene*) requires the *cultivated* human. What he really meant, though, according to Mudimbe, was the *European* human (1988: 44f). It is thus at the end of the 18th century that – in a manner characteristic of the enlightenment – questions of identity and the specificity of identity came to the fore in philosophical discourse, albeit tacitly. These questions appeared in a manner that often unspokenly tethered philosophy to its object(s) of inquiry in ways that couched exclusion under the banner of greater inclusion.[9] Accordingly (although not surprisingly), the exclusion of non-European philosophy from the canon was a decision, not something that people had always believed.

Philosophy in South Africa: Two Lines of Inclusion

How could Swiss philosophy departments help to break open that canon? A country at the fault line of racial tensions and postcolonial debates might teach us important lessons.

Considering their cultural history, their economic development and their political legacy, South Africa and Switzerland do not seem to have much in common. South Africa, where both small district areas and big, cosmopolitan cities continue to grapple with the legacy of apartheid, where most people continue to live in the same income groups as they did when the system of racial segregation was legally intact, still faces a conspicuous set of difficulties in terms of equal education opportunities and a curriculum that reflects the post-apartheid present. As in Switzerland, South African universities are predominantly run by a privileged minority – at both graduate and faculty level.[10] Zooming in on the country's philosophy departments, it becomes evident that staff, student body and reading lists are overwhelmingly white. It is thus not too surprising that the first female black student to receive a PhD in philosophy, Mpho Tshivhase, only graduated in May 2018 (Weinberg 2018). There is, however, a shift taking place: In the wake of the *#RhodesMustFall*[11] and the *#FeesMustFall*[12] movements, questions of curriculum change have been loudly articulated in South African academia – including philosophy departments.[13] In keeping with this development, an ongoing conversation about what should be read and taught – and how – has begun amongst faculty and student bodies.

Here, I would like to draw on some of the experiences I had at the philosophy department of Rhodes University in Grahamstown, RSA, where I was a visiting PhD candidate for a total of 6 months in 2017 and 2018. Following Purtschert's (2012) observation that Switzerland has not sufficiently dealt with its colonial legacy, I suggest that it could be helpful to take a closer look at institutions of knowledge that are explicitly struggling with their colonial heritage. Inspired by the progres-

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[9] Paradoxically and fittingly, identity, here, is typically framed as *universal*.

[10] Currently (2018), South African philosophy departments have an employment rate of non-white faculty members below 10%.

[11] *#RhodesMustFall* is a protest movement that began in March 2015. It was originally directed against a statue commemorating Cecil Rhodes at the University of Cape Town, which was subsequently removed in April 2015. The campaign led to a wider movement to decolonize education across South Africa.

[12] *#FeesMustFall* is a student led protest movement that began in October 2015, responding to an increase in fees at South African universities.

[13] One problem that was addressed is the lack of identification: Non-white students are typically confronted with a philosophy curriculum that is almost monolithically white.

sive discussions I witnessed at Rhodes, the intention behind this comparison is to seek advice from a place where a specific problem – in this case, Eurocentrism in the curriculum – has not only been identified, but recognized for the severity of its impact.

My first encounter with Rhodes University was in 2017. I had just arrived in Grahamstown, which is situated in the Eastern Cape, South Africa's poorest province. At first glance, Grahamstown seems like the perfect example of a sleepy student town. It is home to one of the country's most prestigious universities – Rhodes University – and to numerous elite private high schools. At the same time, the largest part of the town consists of the Joza township – usually referred to as «the location» by its inhabitants – which stretches over the entire eastern part of the city. With a high population density, poor living conditions and a current unemployment rate above 80 %, thousands of people live in densely-packed homes or DIY (Do It Yourself) shacks where several family members often share a single room. I was there to conduct field research on how public space is approached collectively in this context, and spent most of my time going for walks with people from the township. I was, however, also interested in an exchange with the local philosophy department, and eager to learn how philosophy is taught outside of Europe (having studied in Basel and St Andrews, UK). I contacted the head of the philosophy department and was warmly invited to participate in the current semester's meetings, classes, and reading groups.

It was an eventful time for South African philosophy as the Philosophical Society of South Africa (PSSA) was on the brink of collapse over allegations of racism (Whittles 2017). At its annual meeting, held only days before my arrival, the organization's president and several black philosophers had resigned their membership. What partially triggered this eruption was a panel at the previous year's meeting, which had aimed to discuss racism in philosophy. The panelists had been exclusively white. This had sparked a debate, leading a group of black philosophers to argue on an ethical and political basis for the dissolution of the society in a plenary session. According to Ndumiso Dladla, lecturer in philosophy and conference organizer,

their argument was that like many academic societies and institutions in South Africa, the society was deeply implicated in a racist history of the subjugation not only of African people but their knowledges as well. Their argument was that the time had surely come to found a new society in which African philosophy rather than a lesser tradition to be 'included' would make up the very basis of philosophical practice. (First African Philosophy Society in SA launched at Unisa 2017)

Five of the eleven Rhodes philosophy faculty members had attended this PSSA meeting, and the first reading group session of the semester, which was also the first I attended, was held to discuss the issues raised. The goal of the gathering was to set an agenda that takes seriously and acts upon the problems addressed during the PSSA conference. The outcome of our discussion was twofold: For the weekly meetings, we would engage with philosophical texts that either addressed (a) the content of the classes («What kinds of questions should we ask?») or (b) methodologies («How should we ask and answer those questions?»). What follows is a two-part recollection of this discussion, which took place over the course of the semester and was structured around the two leading questions above.

(a) Diversifying the Curriculum

The Rhodes Philosophy Department reading group serves as an opportunity for open exchange. All faculty members participate regularly, and students make up a third of the average of 18 people present. Furthermore, there is an open call for text contributions and everyone is welcome to participate.[14] Thus, at least once a week, students and lecturers engage in a philosophical conversation that is not driven by course work but is meant, rather, to broaden the scope of their curriculum. For the first session, a student and a faculty member each picked a reading; these were Anke Graness' *Writing the History of Philosophy in Africa: Where to Begin?* (2016) and the first chapter of Park's *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy* (2013), both of which contest and contextualize the prevalent bias towards orthodox readings within the philosophical canon.

I have already discussed parts of these texts, however, the structural point I want to make here is the following: Just as white philosophers should – because of their epistemic location and current employment in South African philosophy departments – be agents of a transformation agenda, (white) philosophers employed in Switzerland should actively work towards a more diverse curriculum. A meeting format like the one described above would be easy to organize in addition to courses of the kind currently offered. It also does not require experts in non-Western philosophy.

Of course, the question remains as to what exactly a more diverse curriculum should encompass. Here I can only gesture towards possibilities. For instance, Van Norden, himself an expert in Chinese philosophy, maintains an online bibliography of *Readings on the Less Commonly Taught Philosophies* at

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[14] I gave two talks during my stay and invited a flatmate and my landlord who were both not associated with the university.

http://bryanvannorden.com, where further readings on African, Chinese, Christian, Continental, Indian, Indigenous, Islamic, Jewish, and Latin American philosophy are listed.

(b) Teaching Differently

[W]ould Descartes or Rawls have put so much weight on weightless disembodied individual thinking if they had strong communal ties as expressed in the Southern African concept of Ubuntu? (Nefdt 2018)

One method of questioning the monopoly of a certain epistemology is to juxtapose it with another. Thus, one way to diversify the curriculum would be to examine Western and non-Western philosophical thought side by side.

The third session's reading was picked by one of the senior lecturers. It was Gottlob Frege's *On Sense and Reference* (1892), a classic in Western analytic philosophy. Frege famously proposed a distinction between sense and meaning: The Fregean *sense* of a referring expression is the manner in which one refers to an object. Its *meaning* is the object to which one refers in using it. The distinction is sometimes clarified through the story of Oedipus: Oedipus can be referred to as «the murderer of Laius» by those who know that Oedipus *is* the murderer of Laius. Frege states that the constants «a» and «b» vary in sense if, and only if, «Fa» and «Fb» express different thoughts (Frege 1892: 32).[15] Thus, if I think *Fa*, I do not necessarily *also* think *Fb* if there is room for *not* knowing that Fa is identical with Fb. The Fregean distinction between sense and meaning thus relates to the distinction between «referring to oneself *per accidens* in this way: in Oedipus' mouth, ‹I› and ‹the murderer of Laius› have the same meaning, but not the same sense» (Rödl 2007: 2).[16]

I had discussed Frege's text before, once in Basel as an undergraduate student, and then once more in St Andrews during my graduate year. It is usually debated in the context of Western philosophy of language and logic and has evoked what is now canonically known as *theory of reference* (Evans 1982). In Grahamstown the discussion evolved differently from my previous experiences. While disputing the implications of Frege's argument, a student raised the question whether *Fa* and *Fb* could also express the thoughts of her being black (*Fa*) or being non-white (*Fb*) in the sense outlined by Steve Biko in his writings on Black Consciousness. Biko, a South African anti-apartheid activist and philosopher, distinguishes and defines the categories «black» and «non-white» (1978). Whereas *Fa* would be a self-description of empowerment, defining oneself in opposition to something – in this case: white people – *Fb* is a negative and dependent self-description (*op. cit.*: 52). The student pointed out that there seems to be a peculiar, unique instance of heteronomy in play when black people are referred to as non-white. Our discussion then turned toward the Biko reading, which we had discussed during a previous session. We compared and juxtaposed the different manners of thinking about sense, meaning, references, and the additional distinction we found in Biko between heteronomy and self-determination. Frege helped us to move towards Biko, and Biko enriched Frege.

Teaching inclusively does not necessarily mean turning away from Aristotle, Kant – or Frege. The example I have described above illustrates just one of many possibilities. A comparative reading of Aristotle's *De Anima* with Bantu Philosophy (Mudimbe 1988) could foster a fruitful exchange about the nature of the soul, for instance; a close side-by-side-reading of Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (2006b) with Kwasi Wiredu's *Are there Cultural Universals?* (1995) could shed novel light on the question of what constitutes a social group.[17]

As weeks went by, I came to understand how the two ways of approaching the curriculum – reading different texts and reading texts differently – are mutually dependent: In order to see beyond dominant epistemologies, we should expose ourselves to multi-valent – and perhaps contradictory – views. This will open our eyes for a critical re-reading of canonical texts *and* it will motivate us to read texts outside of the canon – while, in the long run, reading them *into* the canon.

Conclusion and Outlook

Philosophy taught and read in Switzerland is one-sided. Non-Western ways of thinking about thinking should be studied as well. Ignoring non-Western philosophy in research, curriculum, and hiring decisions tacitly suggests that European philosophy *is* philosophy. By encouraging an open discussion amongst faculty members and students, as is done at

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[15] Here, *F* indicates predicate relations between *a* and *b*.

[16] It is no surprise that the example used to illustrate Frege's point, like many others in contemporary analytic philosophy, stems from the Western canon – in this case, from Greek mythology.

[17] I deliberately include suggestions of comparative readings of texts not only of different places, but also of different times.

Rhodes University, Swiss Philosophy departments could not only support the ongoing process of de-colonization, but also benefit greatly from a broader scope of inquiry.

To advocate teaching less commonly read philosophies is not to suggest the unrealistic goal that all philosophers should be equally adept at lecturing on all texts. A first – and honest – step could be to rename the departments. I allude hereby to a hotly debated 2016 *New York Times* opinion piece by Jay Garfield and Van Norden that inspired me to write this text. The newspaper article caused quite a stir by suggesting that any *philosophy* department that fails to teach non-Western philosophy should be renamed a «Department of European and American Philosophy». Although what I propose is a more fundamental shift, I agree with the authors that, particularly for those departments which endorse, implicitly or explicitly, a Eurocentric orientation, there may well be no reason to resist this rebranding.

For a more systemic change, greater measures seem necessary. I propose creating new positions for Indian and Chinese or other lesser explored traditions of philosophy in philosophy departments, thus attracting scholars with the required expertise. Chairs for comparative, intercultural philosophy would also be an option. Of course, creating new positions is a matter of finance and philosophy departments around the world are not exactly thriving as the beleaguered humanities in general are shrinking. A low-budget proposal would be to actively invite scholars who are experts in non-European schools of philosophy to join the departments, thus enriching discussions – in both content and the manner of argumentation – and encouraging Swiss students to read and grapple with philosophy beyond the traditional Western canon.

Method, however, is at least as important as subject. The two can be understood as going hand in hand. Diversity, here, is not only meant as a reading choice, but should be seen as fundamental for good scholarship. Such scholarship is interested not only in *what* there is to know, but *how* this knowledge comes into being. The tenets of Western philosophy itself hold that this should be obvious.

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